

Minnesota Forest Resources Council

Meeting Minutes — March 28, 2000

Minnesota State Horticulture Society — Falcon Heights, MN

Council Members Present: Wayne Brandt, Greg Damlo, Betsy Daub, Jan Green, Rich Holm, Steven Daley Laursen, Gene Merriam (chair), Norm Moody, Brad Moore, Ron Nargang, Dave Parent, Shawn Perich, Jim Sanders, Roger Scherer

Council Members Absent: Joe Day, John Jordan, Bob Oswald

Staff Present: Mike Kilgore, Chris Edgar, Sara Eliason, Dave Miller, Mike Phillips, Chad Skally

Welcome and Chair's Remarks

Gene Merriam called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m. and welcomed guests Charlie Blinn, Rick Dahlman, and Terry Weber.

Public Input/Communication to the MFRC

None

Approval of December 14, 1999 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Jim Sanders moved to approve the January 25, 2000 meeting minutes. Roger Scherer seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Approval of Agenda

Motion: Wayne Brandt moved to approve the March 28, 2000 agenda. Jan Green seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Executive Director Report

Mike Kilgore discussed the following items:

TMDL Letter—The MFRC collaborated with the MN Pollution Control Agency, the MN Department of Natural Resources and the MN Department of Agriculture to develop a joint letter to the EPA regarding the proposed changes to the Total Maximum Daily Load and National Pollution Discharge Elimination System. The governor's office is preparing a cover letter to be signed by Governor Ventura and sent along with the agencies' letter.

MPCA Hearing—In February, at the request of the MN Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Board, Mike attended a meeting at which Boise Cascade Corporation's proposal to expand production at their International Falls paper mill was discussed. The Board asked Mike to provide information on the MFRC and its activities.

Effectiveness Monitoring Proposal—The proposal to study the effectiveness of the timber harvesting and forest management guidelines was submitted on February 1 to the LCMR. This proposal grew out of an SFRA requirement to monitor guideline effectiveness. Mike encouraged council members to talk with LCMR members and champion the proposal. (Council members requested that staff provide a list of all other forestry-related proposals submitted to the LCMR. Gene Merriam suggested that a brief report on other forestry-related proposals be on the April MFRC meeting agenda.)

Miscellaneous—Mike distributed an updated list of MFRC committee membership, a current MFRC mailing list, the revised MFRC per diem and expenses policy, MFRC member reimbursement forms, and the latest Public Concerns Registration Process brochure.

Meetings attended—In February Mike represented the MFRC at the Minnesota Association of County Land Commissioners and the Minnesota Wood Fiber Joint Legislative Council meetings.

Email lists—Mike asked Chad Skally to talk about email lists he has set up. Council members and other interested individuals now have the option of receiving MFRC meeting packets electronically.

Next Meetings—The next MFRC meeting is April 24 and 25 at Gunflint Lodge on the Gunflint Trail in Cook County. There will be a field tour on Monday. The business meeting will be on Tuesday from about 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. (Council members suggested a tour of Hedstrom Lumber Company be organized for Monday morning.) The June meeting will be held at the Cloquet Forestry Center in Cloquet, MN on the 27th. Gene Merriam requested, and the MFRC concurred, that the August meeting be changed from the 22nd to the 8th.

MFRC Committee Reports

Guideline Implementation Monitoring

Dave Parent distributed a page describing progress on guideline implementation monitoring. Sites to monitor are being identified, but it has been tougher than expected to find 120 sites total. The program for the field computers that will be used in the field to record information on guideline implementation is nearing completion. Forest Management Specialists, Inc. of Grand Rapids, MN was awarded the contract for guideline implementation monitoring. The contractor will begin monitoring this spring and complete the assignment by August 30, 2000. Dave distributed a letter to council members requesting input on analysis of the implementation monitoring data being collected this year.

Forest Resource Information Management

Norm Moody deferred to Chris Edgar to update the MFRC on forest resource information management. Chris noted that the first phase of the committee's information review is complete, as resented at the January 2000 MFRC meeting. The committee will identify a contractor to conduct the second phase of the review. The contract will commence within the next few months.

Landscape

Ron Nargang presented a proposal for a road coordination project from the NE Regional Landscape Committee Coordination Working Group. Ron suggested the road coordination proposal be put on the April agenda as an action item. In the North Central Regional Landscape, three informational meetings for the public are planned in April. Dave Miller encouraged council members to attend any or all of these evening meetings. Ron also reported that the Landscape Committee did address the question of a residency requirement for participation on a regional forest resource committee. The committee decided to leave that question open to each regional committee. The committee also has planned a meeting for May 18 in Cloquet to find out about other groups that are doing landscape-level planning and to learn about what they are doing. Of the groups invited to the meeting, thus far 15 have confirmed that they will attend.

Chris Edgar distributed a project prospectus for the spatial analysis of forest landscape conditions. Logan Lee, Chippewa National Forest Supervisor, has accepted the role as team leader for the Project Strategy Team, which will meet on March 30 to initiate its work. Brad Moore noted that the DNR is committed to this project, as evident in the significant resources it is dedicating to the project. He also commended Chris for his work putting together the project prospectus. Wayne Brandt expressed serious reservations about Jim Erkel being involved on the Project Strategy Team, given his comments about this project at a recent MPCA Board meeting.

Written Communication to the MFRC

Gene Merriam distributed a packet of letters sent to the MFRC since the January 25 meeting:

- Lee Pfanmuller sent a letter thanking Gene for the opportunity to present an overview of the Division of Fish and Wildlife's funding situation to the MFRC and for the letter of support sent to Governor Ventura.
- Marcie McLaughlin wrote a letter to Gene and the council, stating her appreciation for the opportunity to serve on the MFRC.
- Bernard Brommer and Ray Waldron of Minnesota AFL-CIO sent a letter notifying that the Minnesota AFL-CIO Executive Council went on record in support of the forest management guidelines and the Sustainable Forest Resources Act.
- Lisa Thorvig, Deputy Commissioner of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, sent a letter requesting that a representative of the MFRC attend the MPCA Board meeting at which the Boise Cascade expansion was on the agenda. (Mike Kilgore noted in his report that he had attended this meeting.)
- Clyde Hanson, Forestry Committee Volunteer with the Sierra Club's North Star Chapter, wrote a letter expressing the Chapter's dissatisfaction with the residency requirements for participation in the landscape program's regional forest resource committees.

- Jim Lemmerman, President of the Minnesota Forestry Association (MFA), drafted a letter to the MFRC and Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership (MFRP) explaining the MFA's abstention from signing the MFRP's Memorandum of Understanding regarding the timber harvesting and forest management guidelines. Jim also noted that MFA would welcome the opportunity to meet with Gene Merriam and Jack Rajala, chair of the MFRP, to discuss this matter further. Gene asked Mike Kilgore to follow up on this request.

Discussion of Peer Reviews: Riparian and Seasonal Pond Guidelines*

Mike Kilgore presented the background, purpose and process for the peer review of the forest management guidelines for riparian areas and seasonal ponds. Gene Merriam distributed copies of a letter from Bridget Hust, Mike Furtman and Carl Richards regarding this peer review.

Mike asked council member for their reactions to the peer reviews. Their summarized comments:

Wayne Brandt—Overall sense from reviews is that at the end of it all, we did pretty well. The silvicultural team's comments about potential impacts to structural/compositional diversity raise some concerns. Given the nature of the guidelines as site level, the uncertainties in the science, and the political nature of the council as a gubernatorially appointed body, the ratings were quite positive (absent the silvicultural team's rating). Comfortable with what reviewers had to say.

Ron Nargang—Overall, the reviews reinforce that the guidelines are a good approach. They do point out multiple areas where the guidelines could be improved; but the message came through clearly that there isn't enough certainty in current information to make a strong recommendation on riparian buffers. Reviews give an overwhelming argument for putting the guidelines in the larger context, i.e., the landscape and setting landscape-scale goals.

Rich Holm—Reviews seem positive. The questions asked in Chicago were very helpful. After reading the reviews, realized that the basal areas in the guidelines mean we are basically managing for shade-tolerant trees.

Dave Parent—Spoke to the reviewers' concern that ephemeral streams not clearly addressed in the guidelines. (The riparian technical team focused on intermittent streams because they have a defined channel.) Agreed with the reviewers that leaving high residual basal areas will be detrimental to forest structure.

Brad Moore—Generally the reviews are positive and indicate that the guidelines are moving us in the right direction. DNR sees that the guidelines need to be tied to the landscape. Doesn't agree that higher residual BA will result in decreased structural diversity, because the flexibility in the guidelines will result in a variety of applications. Noted that there is no agreement among the reviewers on the best riparian management zone width, but that's an area the council can look at. Saw an error in the comment that intermittent streams received no protection at all—the guidelines do protect those that are three feet and wider. Seasonal ponds are a concern, but because there is so little information about them, we need information from this summer's guideline monitoring and existing research studies before we can address any changes to the

guidelines. Peer reviewers' comments on the guidebook design are certainly something to consider in the next iteration of the guidebook.

Jan Green—Saw lots of comments in reviews that we've made progress, moved along in the discussion about site-level guidelines and riparian areas. The council should take the comments on the guidebook's organization seriously—if the reviewers are confused, others probably are too. Maybe the book should be oriented according to outcomes. The definition for silviculture should be expanded as the reviewers suggested; and more emphasis should be placed on using the wide range of silvicultural tools available. Guidelines need to be set in the landscape context. Reviewers' comments that it is counterintuitive to have different RMZ widths for the two silvicultural options (even- and uneven-age management) are noteworthy and something for the council to revisit.

Shawn Perich—Reviews show that the question of how wide riparian management zones should be remains an issue. The guidebook is a tough tool to use and, as the reviewers suggested, the organization should be refined.

Gene Merriam—The legislature looks to peer reviews for objective, scientific validation of processes and products. The reviews give lots of validation for the guidelines, but not enough—evident in the wide range of scores. Yet they don't give a solid sense for how serious the problems are. The MFRC can't go forward with the guidelines with any credibility unless we address the concerns raised in the reviews.

Norm Moody—Satisfied with the review. It's clear that natural occurrences (wide, fire, insects, disease, and beaver) will trump the guidelines and any impacts from forest management prescriptions. The guidelines are very important and will have an impact on a micro-scale, but at the macro-scale, nature takes over.

Betsy Daub—Reviews show that these guidelines are an important step in the right direction. Some common themes running throughout the peer reviews: RMZ width (as it relates to even- vs. uneven-age management, size of water body, trout vs. non-trout stream), basal area (as it relates to even- vs. uneven-age management), landscape scale, seasonal pond and intermittent stream protection, management objective versus silvicultural practice, silviculture definition, organization of the guidelines (on a handout Betsy provided). The reviews also point out concerns, and there are some strong statements to indicate these. These are enough of a concern that we need to respond in some fashion, maybe looking back to the riparian technical team's work to instruct us on how. We should be concerned about the scores of 1 (silviculture) and 2 (terrestrial ecology as relates to seasonal ponds).

Roger Scherer—Peer review comments point out the immensity of the topic and the conflict it can bring about—it's amazing we reached agreement on the guidelines to begin with. Reviews show that the guidelines have to be a work in progress: having them is better than not having them. Now there is something on the table to work with as we learn more and as we get new ideas on how to organize the book.

Jim Sanders—Science is the beginning, not the end point. What we are into now is adaptive management. We have the guidelines and a scientific peer review, and we are moving forward on the guidelines—it's a circular, not a linear process. We can learn from the monitoring we're doing, bridge it with science (such as this review), and continue growing and adapting. The reviews give us something to target off of. Where we are at today with the guidelines is phenomenal. The next step is to move this to the landscape level.

Greg Damlo—The peer review process should be applauded—it gives us information we can use to address any concerns and keep moving forward on the guidelines. Any way we can make the guidelines easier to understand, we will be helping increase guideline use.

Steven Daley Laursen—We are in better shape and have accomplished more than the peer review scores indicate. Concerned that the expectation was that this review would add tremendous value—it won't. The big value was in finalizing the guidelines. The scientists even complicated the whole process; let's keep it as simple as possible.

After this discussion, council members asked chair Gene Merriam to appoint a task force that can work through areas of agreement and disagreement and present the full MFRC with suggestions for acting on the peer review results. Volunteers for the task force are: Wayne Brandt, Betsy Daub, Steven Daley Laursen, Brad Moore, Ron Nargang, Dave Parent, and Roger Scherer. Gene asked Ron Nargang to chair the task force and report back to the full council in April.

Presentation: MFRC's Economic Analysis Research Project

Charlie Blinn and Steve Taff, both from the University of Minnesota, presented progress on their study of the financial effects associated with applying the timber harvesting and forest management guidelines. Charlie is looking at the types of forest management and incentive programs used in all U.S. states and Canadian provinces. Mike Thompson of the USFS North Central Research Station, another project collaborator, is conducting a literature review and looking at individual guidelines to determine which have potential costs and which have benefits. Steve Taff is exploring who pays the costs *if* there are costs and how those costs are passed along through the market. The results can help the MFRC focus ideas for compensation, answering questions of who should be compensated and whether and how they should be compensated. Steve noted that the study will not produce precise dollar amounts for how much any given guideline will cost to implement. The study also is not addressing the question of benefits associated with the guidelines.

Future MFRC Agenda Items

Ron Nargang: Road coordination proposal from the Northeast Regional Landscape Coordination Working Group.

Report from the peer review task force.

Jan Green: Forestry-related proposals submitted to the LCMR in 2000.

Silviculture—assessment of the guidance for silvicultural practices used by various land management entities that are a more plainly divided set of practices than uneven-age at one end and even-age at the other.

Wayne Brandt: Presentation from a local bank on how they view loggers as a lending risk or how they view investment in the forest products sector.

Mike Kilgore: Revisit discussion of issues the MFRC will address.

Public Input/Comments to the MFRC

None

Council Member Comments

Ron Nargang complimented all MFRC members on the rational discussion about the peer review of riparian area and seasonal pond guidelines.

Norm Moody handed out a list showing the percent that bids for timber sales increased over the starting auction price at Cass County timber auctions since 1996.

Adjourn

Gene Merriam adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Eliason